The price of atrocity

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The price of atrocity

by Towaristsch_Mauser

Summary

Young Hannibal is looking for a true friend.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

- A translation of Цена жестокости by Towaristsch_Mauser

"Every Night and every Morn
Some to Misery are Born.
Every Morn and every Night
Some are Born to sweet delight.
Some are Born to sweet delight,
Some are Born to Endless Night".
William Blake

He was awakened by knocking.
Thick curtains were shut; they protected the house from light. It took Will a moment to realize what time it was. His sleep was too deep, thick and sticky; the dream wouldn't let him go and the numbers 10:48 on the display seemed to have no meaning. The green shining eight changed to nine, a rough knock at the door echoed loudly through the room and finally the entire world became transparent. Oh, yeah, it was a weekend morning and its unwelcome visitors.

Will pulled the pillow over his head. Taking part in that conference last week was a careless mistake. It would really have been better for him to stay at home. Sure, money is a very important thing, but not so important to pretend to agree with morons. It started with some journalist s slip of a tongue, then misunderstanding grew like a rolling snowball with each phrase, and then Will said much more than he could risk. He blamed the whole merciless world for everything, thus making fools of FBI, and a creepy outsider of himself. As always.

As a result: thousand dollars – two thirds spent on debts and on a bottle of whiskey he successfully drank. No, wrong story. Bottom line: Will Graham once again is a neighborhood character and an “anima vilis”, an experimental animal for psychotherapists. But it could have been worse. Probably. The knock repeated, and Will blinked staring at the sheet wrinkles. It would be nice if he could take a gun and yell out of the window like a redneck: "This is my land, go fuck yourself, I do not want anybody there!”

Will sighed quietly, got out of the bed throwing away a warm sweat-smelling towel and came to the door. The gun was left in a drawer. After all, Will wasn't a redneck. The lock clicked, the sun hurt his eyes, and he squeezed them shut involuntarily under the bright light. Then he looked.

There was no one in front of him. Will frowned, blinked again, hoping that he hadn't lost his mind yet. He looked down and saw a boy - age of twelve or thirteen - wearing a polo shirt and light breeches. Will stared at him with unbelieving eyes because the boy looked as if he came down from a billboard “All the best for children". The boy was tall for his age and had blond hair bleached by summer suns. The American dream on legs.

“Good morning”, said this American dream looking up at him and crumpling a sheet of paper. Will frowned harder noticing a concerned, even a bit tragic expression in the boy's attentive eyes. What does he want there? Will became slightly embarrassed of his loose, overlaundered boxers, but after all a strange visitor was a boy, not a girl.
“Who are you looking for? Me?”
The boy rubbed one leg with the other, and one white sock slipped slightly.

“Yes, sir” he said politely as if apologizing for the intrusion, “I'm sorry to disturb you. Perhaps...” his voice trembled with emotions, “...have you seen this dog?"
Will, squinting into the sun, took a photo. It was a black-and-white printout of two friends sitting: the Dalmatian puppy and the boy, both happy, well-fed and well-groomed.

“Prince is missed from yesterday... actually, he ran away… not from here, but local people say you pick up lost dogs” the kid swallowed and looked at Will expectantly, trembling with agitation. “Maybe he ran to you?”
Will shook his head.
“No, I haven't seen him. If you want, you can have a look yourself” he nodded toward the dogs turning round just under his feet.
The boy sighed sadly and then suddenly pried into the house:
“How many dogs! You love dogs too, mister?”
“Yes”, said Will and moved away from the door. The dogs rushed happily onto the terrace, circled the boy and sniffed him in a friendly way. In turn, the kid started to pet the dogs saying something softly; the sun was shining gently on them, and Will felt slightly sick from all these sweet caresses and touching, although it was twelve hours since he drank the rest of the whiskey.

“I can call you if I find your Prince”, Will softened a bit. After all, the boy was just a kid, just a casual visitor, not a skilled psychiatrist with intentions to dissect his mind.

“He will be definitely found, mister?” The boy looked at him tilting his head, then patted Winston and straightened up too.
“Of course”, Will smiled a little bit awkwardly, caressing one of the dogs, which sniffed his hand. “What's your name?”
“Hannibal Lecter, sir. And you are…?”
“Will Graham”, He gave the boy a glance. “How did you find me?”
“I heard that you pick up lost dogs” Hannibal scratched a mosquito bite on his hand with evident pleasure. “I hoped that you knew something about Prince ... he was lost not so far away from this place. I live in Baltimore, actually. Maybe, if you get to know something new about my dog... there is my phone number on the print”.
“I see” Will smiled to his own surprise.
“It was pleasure to meet you”, Hannibal smiled and then patted Winston again. “See you later”.
The boy stepped off the porch quickly and climbed the bicycle left by the tree.

Will nodded silently and stayed alone on the terrace, staring vacantly at the playing dogs. The morning sleep was spoilt beyond words, so it was the time to get down to some home routine. There were piles of dirty washing building up while he was resting from the conference, lots of dishes in the sink to be cleaned; the switch in the garage went wrong. Will spent time repairing the switch, until in the evening he realized that he was hungry; after a snack he went out to walk with his pack.

The dogs rushed out barking joyfully and Will followed them to the edge of the wood, breathing the cool night air. Although he was trying to clear his mind during last weeks, in fact, he got that problem stuck in his head. The students once and again asked him about the

conference, but Will didn t answer. He knew (of course) that he was overreacting and that he had told too much and he knew (of course) that he would do it again, if any chance.

Supposingly, the conference participants (as concerned citizens) should have been interested in the following – what all of us can do to reduce the level of violence in society. But in fact they did not care. All those people did not even slightly resemble people. Yes, they were talking to each other, discussing the topic of reducing crime rates, but nothing was hidden behind those bright, beautiful facades. They were hollow. Expensive business suits, elegant dresses and emptiness inside. Will watched, listened, moved from table to table, and sometimes answered the questions monosyllabically. He understood quite clearly that he had separated himself from society by such unsocial behavior, but… whatever. How could he influence the society? Bullshit. Nobody ever listened to his words, nobody was concerned with serious matters.

He noticed a famous psychiatrist, Alana Bloom, their eyes met for a moment and she smiled at him. Alana looked gorgeous: her soft hair was styled lovely, the diamond earrings were sparkling and glittering like the bubbles in a glass of champagne. Will was familiar with Alana and even felt a kind of liking for her, but he can bet that this moment Alana was, without doubt, far away from crimes and violence. Everything was lies and hypocrisy, nothing more.

Will passed her by and stopped involuntarily near another group of people. They discussed what was the meeting's agenda. A journalist was telling everybody about the recent murder, homicide that was committed by teenagers "with special cruelty". One woman who Will presumed to be a well-known politician's wife interrupted her.

“Life has indeed become more violent and more dangerous for today's generation. It s all about blood and gore in computer games, and as a result children grow callous, whatever. I would have long banned these games if I could”.

“Sometimes a virtual shooting becomes a real one”, another young woman nodded squeezing the wineglass.
“The Internet is the greatest source of visual violence for children! Because of it kids are going crazy and aggressive. Do you remember the girl who was bullied on a social network site?”
“That was a website where attention-seekers could ask each other questions”
“It doesn't matter. The poor girl had been virtually attacked countless times, and afterwards she committed a suicide. And those freaks…”
“Those freaks are your children”

The woman turned to Will and gave him a look.
“Are you hinting that they are my children?” she mused with a wry smile what probably meant “go ahead, I'm so excited”.
“Yours or just like yours”, he nodded.
“So, you blame my kids, right?”
“I'm merely talking about the fact that you want to see the root of this problem everywhere: in daily news, computer games, social media - anywhere. Anywhere other than in a mirror”
“And what exactly are you accusing me of?” the woman smiled stiffly eyeing Will up and

down, and he understood perfectly how he looked in her eyes: poorly dressed dork, gloomy type, with a tie from one dollar store. And at the same time this man was trying to teach her. What an irony.

Will took the bit between his teeth.
“You are turning away from something unusual and frightening. You prefer to think that it s not your business; you turn up the radio volume when you hear a victim's scream and a plea for help. You just didn't want to get involved! And you are the role-model for your kids”
“What a tragedy!”
“When Kitty Genovese was stabbed to death in front of multiple witnesses that was a tragedy too”, Will smiled wryly “Do you think something has changed? It is for your permission that adolescents commit these acts of violence”.

The contemptuous expression on the woman's face gave way to incomprehension and then fear. Alana frowned at him and other people got closer. Knowing it was a mistake Will said a few more sentences, his voice cracking with rage, and he was helpless to stop it. They were looking directly at him as if he was drunk dead and had vomited right in the middle of this room…
These memories were making him sick.

Will stopped and peered through the foliage. The rotten smell of coniferous litter underfoot jerked his mind back to the present. He tensed realizing what it was that pulled him out of his thoughts: enthusiastic barking ahead had changed. It sounded vague and then died away completely.

Parting the branches of hazel, Will saw his pack standing around and sniffing another dog, a well-groomed Dalmatian. The dog struggled to get to Will once he saw the man, but couldn't move and just whimpered in pain.
“Hush”, Will said coming closer. Animals have always responded well to the calm tone of his voice. “Easy, pal, we'll find out what is going on”, and then he saw a trap sprinkled with fallen leaves. It had caught the Dalmatian's rear paw. Will felt irritation and pain stirring inside him. Taking the shuddering dog in his arms, Will stroked him to calm him down, and released the springs of the trap, slowly opening the iron jaw. Dalmatian whined weakly and scrambled to the side as soon as he was free, his bloody paw dragging behind, and then Will had to pick him up.

Despite his young age, the Dalmatian was heavy, and Will's arms were aching from weight when he was approaching home.
“You were simply a pup in the photo!” Will chuckled trying to open the door with one hand. With no success evading the dog's hot moist tongue in his ear, Will finally entered the house.

Fortunately, the bone wasn't shattered, otherwise Will would have had to take the dog to the veterinary station. He treated the wound as best as he could, bandaged it and sat on the floor next to the dog.
“Well, you wanna call your master?” he asked the Dalmatian. Of course, he did not answer back. The dog whined quietly, but cheerfully and poked his snout under his savior's armpit. Will patted him skeptically on the lean, puppyish neck and noticed a phone number embossed on a white leather collar.

Hannibal was so happy that Will was able to find his dog that he hung up before Will finished telling about Prince's injured paw. Will tried to call him back, but Hannibal didn't answer. Apparently, he was on his way. Indeed, he appeared an hour later. The bicycle bell tinkled outside, the dogs on the cushions by the fire jerked up, and Prince woke up too and barked sensing his master. Will opened the door and stepped back a little letting Hannibal go inside.
“Hello, Mr. Graham!” Hannibal said slipping in the house past Will. He knelt down on the carpet next to Prince, and clasped Dalmatian's neck hugging him. Well, they were just created for some aristocratic life picture or the Greenpeace's advertisement: two energetic, full of strength and enthusiasm kids, with dashing good looks. Will chuckled wondering whether Hannibal played computer games “with special cruelty”. Hardly. Hannibal had a good posture and he looked more athletic than a computer kid.

“Atta boy" Hannibal said softly "How lucky you are that Mr. Graham found and saved you! Mr. Graham is a great, isn't he?!"
Will looked away and slapped the armrest nervously with one hand. Hannibal's words were too different from what he usually heard about himself.
"Today Prince is not going home with you" Will said and pointed to the clean bandage "But it doesn't mean your journey was in vain, I suppose he's glad to see you".
"Of course!" Hannibal exclaimed, his eyes moistening with tears. He hugged the Dalmatian again, but squeezed him too hard, so the dog grunted shaking his head with displeasure.
"Let him rest" Will said and gently pulled the boy away from Prince. Hannibal left the dog and grabbed Will's hand, not in the least embarrassed, and shook it gratefully exclaiming:
“Thank you, Mr. Graham!”

Will looked at him with doubt, but responded to the handshake nonetheless. Then he sat down on the floor thinking that the whole world wasn't rotten to the core. Somebody probably lived on the “right side”, bringing up their children, teaching them something good by their own example.

“I felt so lonely” Hannibal sighed stroking Will's fingers thoughtfully “I was worrying about Prince, thought about how he was, alone, my poor thing”.
“Well, from now on he will be all right”
“I hope Prince wasn't of great inconvenience to you”.
”No, never mind” Will shook his head and got up – the light waned to dusk outside. “I think your parents are worrying about your absence”
“No, they aren't” Hannibal went to the table showing great interest towards all the baits and hooks. And he put his hands in the fishing stuff immediately.
“What have you got here ... oh!” Hannibal stared at the scarlet drop of blood, which appeared on his fingertip.

“Careful! Don't touch it. I'll get peroxide”.
“Yeah” Hannibal murmured sucking on the wound. And while Will was fumbling with the first aid kit, Hannibal was nosing around in the table drawer. Right away he spotted those photos. There were bloody piles of guts on the floor and dead victims, their faces frozen with the expressions of pain and terror. In a wary silence Will took peroxide and almost dropped it, seeing Hannibal with pictures. The kid said nothing - he didn't expect to see that. He was biting his lips in shock, only his sight was very quickly gliding over the smooth surfaces of the photos.

“Hannibal!” Will protested, quickly took the photos away from him and tossed them back into the drawer “You go home. You come for the Prince the day after tomorrow”.
The boy blinked in confusion looking somewhere over Will's shoulder.
“What have you got there, Mr. Graham?!”
“Something you should not look at”.
Hannibal was not listening; he slid under Will's arm and quickly grabbed the shotgun gasping with delight when he felt its weight.
“Oh, that's amazing! Is it a shotgun?” he licked his lips.
Will took away his shotgun silently, lifted up the boy and carried him to the door. Then he opened the door, waiting for the boy to go out and followed him to the veranda.
“Are you a hunter, Mr. Graham?” the boy asked enthusiastically “Who do you hunt for?”
“I hunt for no one, Hannibal”
“Wow! And I thought you would say you hunt for pesky little boys!” Hannibal grinned showing nice and straight white teeth.
“How can I betray myself so quickly?” Will smiled going down with him from the porch.

Hannibal laughed loudly, jumped off the porch, and grabbed the bike by the handlebars, bringing it to the track. The bike was too big for such a slim boy, and Will couldn't help smiling while watching the boy controlling it. The night was slowly coming down to the horizon, and Hannibal anxiously scanned the darkening sky. Will noticed that look and yawned sadly, suddenly aware that a quiet evening would soon be replaced with two hours behind the wheel.

“Perhaps I should take you home”
“Don't bother” Hannibal said thoughtfully “but you're right, night isn't the best time to wander on your own” he threw the backpack off his shoulders, rummaged in it and fished out the phone. He took a few steps, then paused and began to talk to someone. Of course, children get used to technical innovations quicker than their parents. That means parents must care about how children use them.
The half-opened door creaked - Winston rushed out immediately and began to swirl around.
“...and it must have a large trunk” Hannibal ordered, hung up and looked at Will. “Well, that's all I'm going to bore you for another fifteen minutes, and no more”
“On the other hand you won't go alone at night” Will smiled, patted Winston ear. “Can you come back for Prince the day after tomorrow?”
“It will be Monday… On Monday I have my training. May be, after it”.
“Come”.

Hannibal nodded, put the bike on the grass, took out a screwdriver and paused without knowing how to better handle it.
"Need help?"
"It is necessary to remove the front wheel" Hannibal said and gave Will the screwdriver "I suppose otherwise the bike won't fit in".
Will grinned and quickly dealt with the wheel under Hannibal's scrutinizing glance. The kid was sniffing and sighing of impatience.
"You are very good at it"
"I had been working as a mechanic for a long time" Will twirled the screwdriver between his fingers while looking at the disassembled bike. Hannibal pulled out a napkin, wiped his fingers with it and gave the clean one to Will.

“Mr. Graham, it was cool. You can do anything like that?”
“No… well, not anything ...” Will took a napkin and swallowed hard as he did' t expecting such praise. “Thank you”
Hannibal was confused as well and briefly turned away. He started looking at the road and stood still until he saw a car driving up to the yard.
“Is this after you?” Will nodded towards the car. He put the napkin in pocket, laid his hand on top of Hannibal's head and stroke his hair slightly, looking at the kid in warm confusion. The kid was annoying, like all children, but he was obviously smarter than others. And maybe he was kinder than others - Hannibal was so worried about his pet. It was very strange that parents didn't come after him, and that he had to call a taxi. This world is definitely sick if parents are indifferent even to this kind of children.
Hannibal turned in response to a touch, gave him a strange look and subtly rubbed against his palm. Then he nodded:
“Yes, Mr. Graham. I have to go”
“See you on Monday”

“Please, take care of Prince” said the kid stretching out his hand to say goodbye.
“Of course”, Will shook his hand almost without any hesitation. “He'll be all right”
“Thank you, Mr. Graham. Goodbye”
Hannibal squeezed his hand and without looking back, climbed into the car, leaving Will with the crumpled napkins.
Will stared at the car that was driving away and then he went into the house taking Winston with him.

An hour later the phone rang.
“Yes?” Will answered without looking at phone number. He squeezed the phone between his ear and shoulder and continued to work at the unfinished spoon-bait.
“It's Hannibal” said the voice softly “I hope I'm not interrupting?”
“Not at the moment” Will reeled the fishing-line expertly. “Something happened?”
“No. Nothing happened. I thought you would be interested if I got home safe or not”
“Okay, let's say I would” Will cut off the end of the fishing line and stroked the bait feathers
“And have you got safe?”
“Yes, Mr. Graham. Safe enough”
“Good. Anything else?”
“No. Have a nice dream” he said reservedly.
“You too” Will said and hung up without waiting for this conversation to continue. After removing the bait from the holder, he placed it to the others and pulled out a new hook, much larger than the previous one.

End Notes

There are some beautiful arts

Komminira96
https://pp.vk.me/c617431/v617431514/14c79/x11u4EhJgAQ.jpg

Akimor
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